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CHANGING CONSUMER EXPERIENCES AND BEHAVIORS
& THE ROLE OF THE MARKETER WITHIN
MOBILE ENVIRONMENTS

BY
JENNIFER BONOFF

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
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UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

OF

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ABSTRACT

Global proliferation of mobile technology and widespread ownership of mobile phones has ushered in a new era of behavior and patterns of consumption when using mobile phones. As a result, the way that we look at mobile consumption and its relation to the marketplace needs to be re-evaluated. As usage behaviors are being transformed, my research offers a better understanding of the consumption behaviors associated with using mobile devices in mobile environments. Through analysis of interview and mobile diary data, using liminality as a sensitizing theoretical framework, themes emerged that can help form a better understanding of how people consume and behave while using a mobile phone including Leisure Entitlement, Sociability, Anti-Structure, Communitas, Escapism, and Guilty Pleasure.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

We are in the midst of a distinct shift in culture spurred by the proliferation of mobile technology. The mobile phone has become an integrated and ubiquitous element within 21st century life, with the Pew Research Center (2019) reporting that 96% of US consumers own a mobile phone. Pew also reports that approximately one out of every 5 American adults use the mobile phone as the only means of access to the Internet, no longer relying on traditional home broadband service. On a global scale, the proliferation of mobile devices and services is also undeniable. GSMA Intelligence (Sivakumaran and Iacopino, 2018), a source for mobile industry data and analysis, reports that 2017 saw over 5 billion individuals connected to mobile services with projections of global unique mobile subscribers to reach 5.9 billion by 2025. This equates to 71% of the global population, with a projection of 61% of that population adopting the mobile internet by 2025. GSMA Intelligence (2018) also predicts that the number of individuals connected to the mobile internet will be the key metric moving into the future by which to measure the “reach and value created by the mobile industry... as mobile internet users are the addressable market for e-commerce, fintech and a wide range of digitally delivered services and content” (p.2).

With this global proliferation of mobile technology and widespread ownership of mobile phones, a new era of behavior and patterns of consumption when using mobile phones has emerged (Lamberton and Stephen, 2016). As a result, the way that

we look at mobile consumption and its relation to the marketplace needs to be re-evaluated. As usage behaviors are being transformed, a better understanding of the consumption behaviors associated with using mobile devices in mobile environments is warranted.

In the last 15 years, academic research has begun to examine the digital transformation of marketplaces and other changes arising from the proliferation of Digital, Social Media, and Mobile Marketing (DSMM). An emerging body of research looks at the societal and cultural implications of our increasingly technologically mediated environments (Gergen, 2010; Turkle, 2012a). Another line of research and theory looks at marketing in computer-mediated environments and presents a framework structured around computer mediated environment interactions (Yadav and Pavlou, 2014). Additional research has focused on the connection between the offline and online world to form a better understanding of the interrelation of digital vs nondigital marketing pursuits (Naik and Peters, 2009; Trusov, Bucklin, and Pauwels, 2009; Zhang et al. 2010; Stephen and Galak, 2012). However, from a theoretical perspective, a gap exists relating to study of experiences and behaviors within mobile environments while using mobile phones in relation to consumption.

My research uses liminality as a theoretical lens to better inform and interpret changing behaviors and consumption through mobile phone usage. Liminality is seen as a more fluid transition between states of being marked by a sense of in-betweenness and being out of time and place, characterized by leisure, escapism, and consumption. With origins in anthropology (van Gennep, 1960; Turner, 1974), liminality has evolved and emerged within the marketing literature as a viable, contemporary way to

look at consumption. Schoutten's early (1991) research looked at the consumption of aesthetic plastic surgery through the lens of liminality. Thomsen and Sorenson (2006) studied how liminal consumers turn to consumption symbolism during family life cycle stages. Hirschan, Ruvio and Belk (2012) added to the growing contemporary, less-structured look at liminality while highlighting the importance of looking at the spaces where liminal processes occur to uncover the "social and cultural *characteristics* attached to the places..." (p. 370). In addition, Cappellini and Yen's (2016) research moved the spaces of transition prevalent within the literature such as the garage (Hirschman, et al, 2012), the nightclub (Taheri, et al, 2016), or the airport (Huang, Xiao, and Wang, 2018) to an online environment, thus providing my own research with a foundation for investigation of the mobile environment from a lens of liminality. Following this contemporary, less-structured view of liminality, my research looks at the characteristics of leisure entitlement, anti-structure and *communitas* to better understand the consumption behaviors associated with using mobile devices in mobile environments.

My research is qualitative in nature and begins with depth interviews. In an effort to build upon the interviews and inform an 'in situ' investigation, my research culminates with a mobile diary study of key informants. These informants are asked to maintain personal introspective mobile diaries for a period of one week recording thoughts, feelings, images etc. throughout the day in order to gain a deeper insight into behaviors while using mobile phones. In Chapter 2, I review the literature surrounding (1) the foundation and evolution of Digital, Social Media and Mobile Marketing (DSMM), and (2) the origins and evolution of liminality as a theoretical

lens and its usefulness within contemporary marketing research to unpack the complexity of mobile environments and mobile phone use. Chapter 3 describes my research design and data collection and analyzation methods. Chapter 4 describes my findings. Finally, Chapter 5 discusses the outcomes of liminality as a theoretical lens from which to study mobile environments and mobile phone usage, liminations, and areas of future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The proliferation of mobile technology has given rise to evidence of changing behaviors and complex consumption experiences relating to mobile phone usage (Lamberton and Stephen, 2016). As a result, the way that we look at and understand mobile phone usage and behaviors relating to consumption warrants attention. This chapter discusses literature surrounding the evolution of DSMM (Digital, Social Media, and Mobile Marketing), as well as the origins and evolution of liminality and its applicability as a theoretical lens within contemporary marketing research to investigate complexities of consumption while using mobile phones.

Digital, Social Media, & Mobile Marketing

As mobile technology and connectivity have evolved, so too has media consumption and trends within Digital, Social Media, and Mobile Marketing. Media consumption in the 19th and 20th century was bound by spatial and temporal constraints. Hemment (2005) describes the evolution of media consumption with the introduction of radio and portable music players affording an opportunity for individuals to consume media that transcended specific time and place. Dimmick et al (2011) further posit that the emergence of mobile devices including cell phones and other small portable media devices are allowing consumers to “exploit gaps in their

daily routines when/where other more traditional channels of communication are unavailable, inappropriate, or inconvenient in order to garner news and information” (p. 24). This also has bearing on how people interact with brands and consume within these environments. As a result, the marketing discipline has begun to take steps to research consumption and marketing within these spaces.

In 2016, the *Journal of Marketing* and the Marketing Science Institute (MSI) joined together on a special issue in the *Journal of Marketing* titled, “Mapping the Boundaries of Marketing: What Needs to be Known.” This collaborative effort stemmed from a desire to examine the current state of the marketing arena and crystalize the future direction of research within marketing. As Lamberton and Stephen (2016) posit, “Over the past 15 years, digital media platforms have revolutionized marketing, offering new ways to reach, inform, engage, sell to, learn about, and provide services to consumers” (p. 146). The wide proliferation of mobile connectivity and networked technologies have influenced the way that people consume and even behave within different types of marketing environments.

A History

Lamberton and Stephen (2016) define four eras broken up into 5-year periods, with the key themes being the digital space as a means of individual expression, the digital space as a tool, and the digital space as a source of marketing intelligence. A brief explanation along with key research from each era is described below.

Era 1 encompasses the years between 2000-2005 as research on interactive digital media and consumer engagement were starting to appear in the literature. As

delineated by Lamberton and Stephen (2016), notable research during Era 1 focused on the Internet as a platform for individual expression (Shau and Gilly, 2003; Kozinets, 2002; Dellarocas, 2003; Godes and Mayzlin, 2004), a search and decision support tool (Haubl and Trifts, 2000; Lynch and Ariely, 2000), and a marketing intelligence tool (Ansari and Mela, 2003; Chatterjee, Hoffman, and Novak, 2003). Shau and Gilly (2003) described how a consumer's online experience can affect his/her life while offline. Kozinets (2002) groundbreaking work within online communities paved the way for the emergence of Social Media platforms. The emergence of Kozinets' Netnography gave valuable insight to a practitioner's perspective into the power of online communities and interactions within them. Dellarocas (2003) and Godes and Mayzlin (2004) introduced the importance and future viability of WOM (Word of Mouth). The notion that the Internet could be used as a way to ease the process of search and choice was emphasized in Haubl and Trift's (2000) foundational study that helped form a connection between consumer behavior within new online consumption settings. Ansari and Mela's (2003) research indicated how the prediction of consumers' preferences and behaviors could pave the way for elevated levels of loyalty and satisfaction for those customers.

Mobile marketing and research also began to emerge within the literature in the early 2000s. Balasubramanian, Peterson, and Jarvenpaa (2002) acknowledged that mobile technology was fast becoming a fixture in daily life and offered a foundational conceptual framework for evaluating mobile commerce. The authors foreshadowed the emergence of mobile as a revolutionary phenomena that had the potential to "change the current marketing paradigm" (p. 360). Barwise and Strong (2002) looked

at the effectiveness of mobile marketing through SMS (Short Message Service) text messages and the resultant benefits of reaching the young adult population. Yet while digital and mobile marketing from an academic perspective was emerging within the literature with Glaser (1993, p. 3) presaging that “all marketing is, or soon will be, interactive marketing,” the lack of high-quality work that could lay a lasting foundation with generalizable findings for this line of research was scarce.

During Era 2, from 2005-2010, the consumer truly emerged. The Internet was becoming more widespread and a part of the consumer’s daily existence, and as a result, the consumer began to take an active role in this new space through social networks and WOM. The themes that emerged during this Era (Lamberton and Stephen, 2016) included the importance of WOM as a means of consumer expression and its relation and importance to marketing (Chevalier and Mayzlin, 2006; Schlosser, 2005; Kozinets, 2010), and the proliferation of digital networks as tools (Trusov, Bodapati, and Bucklin, 2010; Katona, Zubcsek and Sarvary, 2011).

Mobile research was also beginning to gain increased traction within specialized journals. Rettie et al, 2005 showed how the mobile phone experience (particularly SMS) could enhance experiences for the consumer in addition to providing an advantage to marketers due to positive outcomes in relation to attitudes towards the brand and purchase intentions. McManus and Scornavacca (2005) looked at the viability of mobile marketing and dimensions that play a role in mobile marketing effectiveness including permission, reach, richness and customization. This research provided an early example of a framework for using mobile devices as a legitimate means of promotion. This era was also highlighted by the pioneering work of Banerjee

and Dholakia (2008) which brought mobile research to the forefront. The authors' insight into mobile advertising and how location-based advertising aims to "remove geographical and information barriers between customers and marketplace offerings" paved the way for future research on context and behaviors while engaging with mobile devices within emerging mobile environments (p. 68). In 2009, Shankar and Balasubramanian defined mobile marketing as the "two-way or multi-way communication and promotion of an offer between a firm and its customers using a mobile medium, device, or technology" (p. 118). The authors offered a composite of the relevant mobile research of the time along with a conceptual foundation for mobile marketing.

Era 3, the 'Age of Social Media,' spanned from 2011-2014. This time period saw Internet usage penetration reach 80% within the United States, 250 million individuals logging in to Facebook on a daily basis, along with the emergence of other social media platforms including Instagram, Twitter, and Pinterest (Lamberton and Stephen, 2016, p. 159). Research during Era 3 developed consumer-based theories and also focused on how to utilize consumer influence and behavior through social media via the platforms gaining traction (e.g., Facebook and Twitter). A foundational piece was Berger and Milkman's (2012) research which showed the link between high arousal and content sharing and highlighted the key factors that entice people to share via social media. Additional research sought to uncover psychological factors surrounding how people behave and interact through social media (Toubia and Stephen, 2013). Era 3 also saw the emergence of research that sought to gain understanding of the societal and cultural implications of technologically mediated

environments and the behavioral outcomes of increasing proliferation of mobile devices within daily life (Gergen, 2010; Turkle, 2012b). Turkle pioneered work in this domain with her look into human interaction with technology and the outcomes of being continuously connected:

We've become accustomed to a new way of being "alone together." Technology-enabled, we are able to be with one another, and also elsewhere, connected to wherever we want to be. We want to customize our lives. We want to move in and out of where we are because the thing we value most is control over where we focus our attention. We have gotten used to the idea of being in a tribe of one, loyal to our own party. (Turkle, 2012b, para. 4)

Banerjee and Dholakia (2013) also continued to revolutionize work surrounding mobile arguing that research needs to focus on how the wireless internet impacted consumption and receptivity to mobile advertising. The authors provided valuable insight into ubiquitous consumption while further clarifying segments of consumers within emerging mobile spaces.

Beginning in 2015, Era 4 is described as 'The New Era: The Rise of DSMM Culture and the Postdigital World' (Lamberton and Stephenson, 2016, p. 162). The focus is shifting towards the importance of identifying mobile activity that generates marketing outcomes that provide value to firms (Bart, Stephen, and Sarvary, 2014; Danaher, et al, 2015; Fong, Fang, and Luo, 2015). As a result, a more nuanced understanding of the mobile domain is warranted. My research is positioned within this space and looks to advance knowledge by forming a better conceptual understanding of mobile phone usage and changing behavior and experiences within mobile environments. To gain a more nuanced understanding of the mobile domain, my research uses liminality as a sensitizing theoretical lens. The following will show

the origins and evolution of the concept and how it has emerged within marketing literature as a viable, contemporary way to look at consumption within mobile environments characterized by mobile phone use.

Liminality as a Theoretical Lens

Liminality was originally described as a state characterized by uncertainty and a sense of being out of time and place. In his seminal work, *The Rites of Passage* (*Les Rites de passage*), Arnold van Gennep (1960) introduces liminality as the transitional phase as people move to different roles in life. Van Gennep describes stages of human transition in rites of passage as individuals go through life, with the transitions being marked by socio-cultural rituals. Van Gennep (1960) defines these rituals as processes outside the realm of daily activity which “enable the individual to pass from one defined position to another which is equally well-defined” (p. 3). All rites of passage embody a three-stage pattern of transition stemming from the Latin root, *Limen*, meaning threshold. These states include separation (pre-liminal), transition (liminal), and incorporation (post-liminal).

The pre-liminal stage of separation represents the point when individuals become removed from their customary social existence, often marked by customs and rituals. The middle stage, liminality, is the stage of transition where an individual has moved from one position but hasn’t yet occupied the next – a cultural realm that is removed from past and future states. These liminal transitional stages are periods of anti-structure, occupying a place somewhere between one structure and another. The origin of liminality as documented by van Gennep (1960) assumes that the liminal

state is imposed upon the individual due to factors stemming from nature or evolutionary process (i.e. the transition from one season to another or the transition from adolescence to adulthood). During the post-liminal stage of incorporation, the individual returns to society embodying his/her new status or position.

British Anthropologist, Victor Turner, significantly contributes to the theory on liminality through his studies of tribal and pre-industrial societies. Turner was interested in how societies are structured and the role of the ritual beginning with fieldwork among the Ndenbu of Zambia where he focused on rituals within these African villages. He saw the rituals as social drama and religious expression of the sacred with liminality as a means of building structure in traditional ritual societies. Liminality was the middle phase of rituals during which “participants are in transition from one social status to another” (Turner, 1982, p. 24). He described liminal individuals as “neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremony” (Turner, 1969, p. 95).

Turner developed the concept of *liminoid*, or *liminal-like*, to showcase the continued applicability of liminality in a more modern post-industrial society. Turner described the liminoid as a functional equivalent of the liminal, as liminoid “resembles without being identical with liminal” (1982, p. 32) in a post-industrial, secular society that saw a schism between work and leisure. Socio-historic shifts in the work / play divide emerged as more emphasis was placed on time outside of the workspace, with the evolving conceptualization of liminality becoming characterized by leisure, escapism, and consumption. “One *works* at the liminal, one *plays* with the liminoid”

(Turner, 1974, p. 86). In his (1974) essay, “Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow and Ritual: An Essay in Comparative Symbolology,” Turner articulates that within consumption-laden societies, liminal experiences in communal ritual have largely been succeeded by liminal-like experiences which occur during more leisurely activities. Whereas liminal states are imposed as individuals progress through societal ritual in which they change status or position in society, Turner indicates that liminoid experiences are the “successor of the liminal in complex large-scale societies, where individuality and optation... have in theory supplanted collective and obligatory ritual performances” (1987, p.29).

Turner referenced liminal-like examples within modern societies of his time through sporting events, artistic performances, carnivals, and festivals. Cappellini and Yen (2016) explain that the liminal-like experiences Turner described through vehicles like performance represent breaks from working life that still imbue characteristics of liminality as originally postulated. The authors go on to posit that liminal-like experiences are less rigid, more fluid transitions between states where individuals can willingly enter, leave, and return again, but throughout their journey, liminal characteristics remain including the “sense of being out of place, being outside classified categories and experiencing a *communitas*” (p. 1263). Though Turner’s conceptualization of ‘modern day liminality’ was produced within the frame of post-industrial societies, it has evolved within the marketing literature as a theory less focused on social structural change, but one that offers a tool to give insight into aspects of contemporary consumption.

In 1991 John Schouten used liminality to understand the consumption of aesthetic plastic surgery in daily life. A key emergent theme in his research was the process of identity reconstruction which Shoutten informed with conceptualization of rites of passage and liminality. Shoutten argued that the participants' decisions to proceed with plastic surgery occurred during a period of liminality marked by instability and ambiguity. For participants, plastic surgery "helped restore a sense of self-congruity lost in their liminoid states, thus hastening the passage to more stable, postliminal states" (p. 421). Shoutten's analysis, however, still pointed to more structural transition from one state to another where the ambiguities and anxieties experienced during the liminal phase are mitigated as individuals complete the transition.

Increased research interest in the nuances of liminality and its relation to consumption began to accelerate in the early 2000's. In 2006, Thomsen and Sorenson linked the family cycle stage with indication of consumer practices and sought to develop a better understanding of "how consumption (objects) may contribute (on a symbolic level) to consumers' transitions between stages in their life cycle" (p. 907). The authors found that liminal consumers turn to consumption symbolism in their journeys to achieve a post-liminal 'desired identity' (p. 922). The authors even posit that consumers may need to dispose of certain consumer items used during liminality in order to shed any residual ambiguity or uneasiness experienced while in the liminal phase.

Authors including Hirschman, Ruvio and Belk (2012) added to liminality research by arguing that contemporary liminality and its relation to consumption is less linear and less structured, imbuing complexity and continuity. Hirschman, Ruvio

and Belk developed a “model of liminal household spaces and their dynamic role in marketing and managing meanings of everyday life” (p. 369). The authors argued that liminal states and the transformative processes that take place within them may not have definitive resolution, but rather may be returned to again and again by individuals. While liminal states may be permanent and unidirectional (e.g. weddings, funerals and childbirth), they also may be temporary and cyclical (e.g. Halloween, Burning Man Festival).

While Hirschman, Ruvio and Belk (2012) highlight the extensive research regarding possessions as part of the processes of transformation, they also point out the dearth of documented study within marketing research relating to the “actual physical thresholds and sites of liminality” (p. 370). They argue that perhaps there is even greater knowledge to be gained by investigating the places and spaces where liminal processes occur while looking to uncover the “social and cultural characteristics attached to the [spaces] and places where liminal and transformative events occur” (p. 370-1).

Turner (1974) originally identified ‘permanent’ liminal-like settings and spaces such as “bars, pubs, some cafes, social clubs, etc” (p. 86). Additional research has identified liminality in fixed locations including hotels as shown in the work of Pritchard and Morgan in 2000. Hayward and Hobbs (2007) investigate how British town centres have been transformed into liminal spaces. Rowe (2008) discusses modern sports as liminal phenomena that “carry into the modern world as powerful, modern ritual performance” (p. 127). Taheri et al’s (2017) study classifies commercial hospitality (i.e. nightclubs) as liminoid consumption spaces and explores

the impact of escapism and leisure entitlement upon involvement in these liminoid spaces, thereby contributing a theory of liminoid motivators within commercial hospitality. Taheri et al (2016) use Turner's conceptualization of the liminoid to explain the experiential consumption process in a nightclub setting while looking at the specific liminoid characteristics of anti-structure, spontaneous communitas, and optionality or freedom to enter the liminoid. Huang, Xiao, and Wang (2018) explore the liminal nature of airports.

Although authors including Hirschman, Ruvio and Belk (2012) and Taheri et al (2016) referred to physical, grounded places and spaces of transition such as the garage or a nightclub, this line of research influenced my own study which seeks to look at *emerging mobile environments* as contemporary and viable spaces of liminality. Cappellini and Yen (2016) further explore the spatial dimensions of online/onsite space to understand participants' experiences within an East Asian micro-blogging service called Plurk. While Cappellini and Yen look at liminality at a collective rather than individual level through an arguably marginal group of Taiwanese immigrant mothers living in the UK, this research is of particular relevance to my study as it illustrates how a product (Plurk) both resembles the liminoid identities of its users while also acting as a *producer* of liminality. By looking at liminality in this way, this lens could inform my research and the potential link between smartphone usage and consumption.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

If there were only one truth, you couldn't paint a hundred canvases on the same theme. - Pablo Picasso, 1966

Overview

The goal of this research is to better understand the consumption behaviors associated with using mobile devices in mobile environments. I utilize a qualitative approach for my overall research endeavor, using liminality as a sensitizing theoretical lens. When selecting a methodological approach, Bonoma (1985) suggests looking at two characteristics of the research problem: (1) the purpose of the research, and (2) the phenomena of interest. Regarding mobile phone usage and consumption behaviors, the goal is to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomena of interest (Geertz, 1973) and acquire a more holistic and contextual meaning (Miles 1979). The phenomenon under investigation in my research is also not easily observed outside of the natural setting where the behavior actually occurs, thus presenting a phenomenon that is complex and contextually bound, while at the same time not easily concurrent with quantification. My research began with depth interviews and culminated with a mobile-diary study.

Depth Interviews Study & Procedures

A foundational method of qualitative research is the depth or unstructured interview. Morrison et al (2002) argue that the very nature of the depth interview

allows the researcher to “delve deeply into the everyday worlds of meanings constructed by participants” (p. 46) with the desired outcome of generating meaning through the “participants world in the way and in the concepts that a participant uses” (p. 47). Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) describe the value of language and its ability to explicate substance and meaning:

The expressive power of language provides the most important resource for accounts. A crucial feature of language is its capacity to present descriptions, explanations, and evaluations of almost infinite variety about any aspect of the world, including itself. (p. 126)

As Legard, Keegan, and Ward (2003) posit, the depth interview is designed to accommodate “structure with flexibility” in that “even in the most unstructured interviews the researcher will have some sense of themes they wish to explore” (p. 141). Yet the depth interview allows the researcher the flexibility to respond and react to the ebb and flow of the respondents’ dialogue.

The Interview Guide

Even though depth interviews are designed to be flexible and informal, I used a general interview guide. The depth interview guide used as part of my research process was adapted from the stages set forth by Legard, Keegan and Ward (2003), Rubin and Rubin (1995), and Spradley (1979) as described below:

Stage One - Arrival: During this initial stage as my participants arrived, I asked that they indicate their understanding and consent through their signature on the presented consent form. Participants were also reminded that the interviews were

to be recorded, and that they could terminate participation at any time without penalty or negative consequence. I also assured the participants that their privacy would be protected as each participant was assigned a pseudonym.

My goal during this initial stage was to ensure that the participant felt comfortable and at ease. As described by Leggard, Keegan and Ward (2003), the researcher should assume the “role of the guest while at the same time be quietly confident and relaxed, making conversation but avoiding the research topic until the interview begins (p. 145). The recording device that I used for each interview was inconspicuously placed to avoid discomfort and artificiality during the interview. Also, each participant chose the location for the interview that was quiet and free from distractions so as to ensure a comfortable environment (Belk, Fischer, and Kozinets 2012). Once each participant was comfortable and this initial stage was complete, I began the interview itself.

Stage 2 - Introducing the Research: At this point, I continued to assure that the participant was at ease and the environment comfortable as I introduced the research topic.

Stage 3 – Beginning the Interview: I began the interview in an informal manner as my goal to make the participant comfortable continued. I asked initial broad biographical questions including age and work / school role in an effort to establish rapport and begin to glean insight into lifestyle characteristics that may come into play further along in the interview (McCracken, 1988).

Next, I used a “grand tour question” to guide the interviews in lieu of a structured, linear list of questions (McCracken, 1988; Thompson, Locander, and Pollio, 1989). The grand tour question was: “How do you feel when using your mobile phone?” Subsequent prompts to further guide the conversation throughout the interview were, “Where are you located when you enjoy using your mobile phone the most?” or “Are there certain times of day that entice you to pull out your phone?” or “What types of things do you use your mobile phone to accomplish?” or “How do you use your mobile phone for entertainment / work / etc?”

Stage 4 – During the Interview: At this stage, I was actively engaging the participant in discussion regarding the key themes (both inductive and deductive) and followed up with questions and probes to ensure depth. Throughout the depth interview, I ensured that I was “working at a deeper, more focused level than normal, discovering ideas, thoughts, and feelings that may be dormant in daily life” (p. 146).

Prompts and probes continued to be used when necessary. McCracken (1988, p. 35-36) describes three types, all of which I utilized throughout the depth interviews: *contrast prompts* which employed emic descriptions or terminology used by the participant in order to draw differing conditions; *category prompts* which worked to allow the participant to express deeper meaning or definition to phenomena being discussed; and *exceptional events prompts* utilized to recall noteworthy or “exceptional” experiences as they related to the phenomena.

Stage 5 – Ending the Interview: As we entered into the final phase of the interview itself, I worked to bring the participant back to the “level of everyday social interaction” (p. 146).

Stage 6 – After the Interview: Leggard, Keegan and Ward (2003) posit that the aftermath of the interview is equally as important regarding both the care of the participant as well as immediate reflections by the researcher. Regarding the care of the participant, I once again ensured confidentiality and offered thanks.

I followed an observational protocol regarding reporting my thoughts and reflections for each of the depth interview sessions. My ultimate goal for the depth interviews was to generate what Geertz (1973) describes as thick description. My role as a researcher cannot be merely to record the spoken word, but rather to engage in interpretation. Thick description can discern a wink from a twitch, and a parody of a wink from an actual wink (Greenblatt, 1997). Contextual factors such as the interview tone, environmental conditions, and observable behaviors and reactions of each participant were recorded using both descriptive and reflective notes following the procedure described by Bernard (2002). Two categories of note-taking were involved including journal entries and resultant field notes. During the actual interview sessions, a journal was utilized to record initial thoughts and notes which were used to spark memory and enhance the subsequent production of the thick description field notes.

All interviews were recorded and transcribed into a digital format. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed iteratively so as to allow for themes to emerge and interview questions to become more focused and probing moving forward (Birks & Mills, 2011; Charmaz, 2006; Urquhart, 2013).

Data Collection - Depth Interviews

Study Participants

I utilized purposive sampling in this research. This non-random sampling technique is often referred to as a judgment sample and is defined as the “deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses” (Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim, 2016, p. 2). My participant sample was drawn from a population of undergraduate, graduate, and young professionals who are between 18-35 years of age and who are key players and heavy users of technology and social media (Shermach, 2005). The participant makeup of my research is relevant to the overall study of ubiquitous technology in that all participants own a smartphone with mobile Internet capabilities. I specifically chose participants that are “proficient and well-informed with a phenomenon of interest,” and have “knowledge and experience... note the importance of availability and willingness to participate, and the ability to communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive, and reflective manner” (Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim, 2016, p. 2).

I identified and recruited an initial set of informants through my undergraduate and graduate contacts and professional networks such as LinkedIn. I emailed 30 initial contacts in my network using the *Depth Interview Recruitment Email* found in

Appendix A. The initial contacts were informed that a purpose of the research was to explore how they feel and act when using their mobile devices. Participants were also asked to confirm that they were between the ages of 18-35 as well as owners and regular users of a smartphone. I also utilized a snowball sampling technique (Moriarty 1983), whereby informants recommended others who may be helpful and relevant to the study. A signed consent form as illustrated in Appendix B was required for each participant before the interviews commenced. As the data analysis section will detail, the interviews and analysis were done iteratively, with one building on another in order to dive as deep as possible into the emerging themes.

The final sample size for the depth interviews was determined once saturation was achieved, meaning the point in time when the interview process produces insights that are repetitive with no new themes emerging. Saturation is defined as "collecting data until no new information is obtained" (Morse 1995, p. 147) with previous research suggesting that comparable studies achieve saturation with 12-24 participants (Creswell, 1998). Ultimately, 22 participants were interviewed as part of my study and each received \$5 for participation.

Table 3-1 shows the profile of participants for the depth interviews:

Profile of Participants – Depth Interviews				
Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Occupation	# of Inquiries
Sierra	22	F	MBA Graduate Student	3

Braden	31	M	Social Media Specialist	3
Judy	34	F	MBA Student	1
Celia	21	F	MS Innovation & Strategic Mgt Student	2
Tessa	20	F	Undergraduate Student	1
Tristan	23	M	MS Innovation & Strategic Mgt Student	1
Jillian	35	F	Website Designer	2
Jesse	32	M	MBA Student	1
Keith	24	M	MBA Student	1
Cheryl	19	F	Undergraduate Student	2
Doug	19	M	Undergraduate Student	1
John	20	M	Undergraduate Student	1
Karen	18	F	Undergraduate Student	1
Kevin	23	M	Undergraduate Student	1
Stevie	24	M	MS Innovation & Strategic Mgt Student	1
Elizabeth	20	F	Undergraduate Student	1

Carrie	29	F	Undergraduate Admissions Counselor	1
Toby	28	M	Financial Advisor	
Katherine	25	F	MS Innovation & Strategic Mgt Student	1
Lily	18	F	Undergraduate Student	1
T.J.	19	M	Undergraduate Student	1
Will	27	M	MBA Student	2

Table 3-1: Profile of Participants, Depth Interviews

Data Collection – Mobile Diary

In an effort to supplement my depth interviews and inform an 'in situ' investigation, my research also included a mobile diary study where participants were asked to share in-the-moment data throughout the course of their daily lives. Two key informants were asked to maintain a personal introspective diary on their mobile phone for a period of one week recording their thoughts and feelings throughout the day. This enabled me to gain a deeper insight into consumer experiences and behaviors while my participants were engaging in mobile phone use. Specifically, they were asked to submit feedback that could be any combination of text, images, audio or video. I recorded time of day and the participants could choose whether to

share their location. The estimated time commitment per day was approximately one hour. Follow-up interviews with diary participants took approximately one hour for each participant.

Diary methods conducted on smartphones are emerging within the literature as a key way to gain ‘in the moment’ data while participants are engaging in daily life activity. A mobile diary can allow participants to document what they are doing, where and when they are doing it, and how and why the action occurred.

Qualitative mobile diary research via smartphones is becoming more widespread in academic research, beginning in psychological and anthropological research, and moving into social science research such as marketing. Patterson (2005) argues that qualitative diary research “is an innovative way to capture rich insights into processes, relationships, settings, products, and consumers” (p. 142). Jones and Woolley (2015) utilized a solicited email diary approach to look at the impact of commuters in London during the 2012 Olympic Games. Sie, Koh, Zainuddin and Johnson (2016) utilized mobile diaries to gather information on Chinese consumers’ lifestyles and financial behaviors. Kamran (2010) had college students complete 24- hour mobile phone diaries to study calling and texting patterns of college students. The mobile diary has been used in other forms in the literature including Palen and Salzman’s (2002) research which utilized voicemail diaries and Harper et al’s (2008) work which employed wearable automatic time-lapse cameras that offered seamless investigation into activities while ‘on the move.’

Digital diaries allow in the moment capture of data - actions, feelings, thoughts – in a rich, compelling manner, and are well-suited to gain insight into consumer

experiences within mobile environments. This type of rich data transcends the capability of information able to be ascertained via depth interview. Sie, Koh, Zainuddin, and Johnson (2016) argue that mobile diaries are effective due to the ability to record data in situ, at limited expense, on a device that has become a close companion of people across the globe. Further, the rich data that can be captured is compelling. In addition to the written word, participants can capture images and footage of the in-situ experience.

To facilitate my research goals, I created a mobile diary application designed for the mobile smartphone to allow participants to easily and seamlessly enter data while their behaviors and experiences are actually occurring. The mobile diary application was used to supplement the depth interviews and allowed for a deeper understanding and engagement with participants as they progressed through the course of their daily lives, thus solidifying my analysis of what actually occurs in real-time.

The mobile diary study which was conducted after the depth interview process was complete proved to be an essential part of my research progression. Through the information collected via the mobile diaries of the two key participants, I was able to further probe the findings of the depth interviews and truly see what elements carry over ‘in the moment.’ The mobile diary data and subsequent depth interview follow-up with the participants also crystalized the specific behavioral adaptations that take place while using mobile phones. The ability to move with the participants throughout daily life and capture ‘in situ’ data was crucial to fully capture the essence and particularities of mobile phone usage. The mobile diary study also helped to relieve some artificialities of the interview process itself which is based on recall and

conversation within a confined setting. The mobile diary study allowed ‘in the moment’ access to the participant that added significantly to the findings.

The image below shows a visual representation of the mobile diary application:

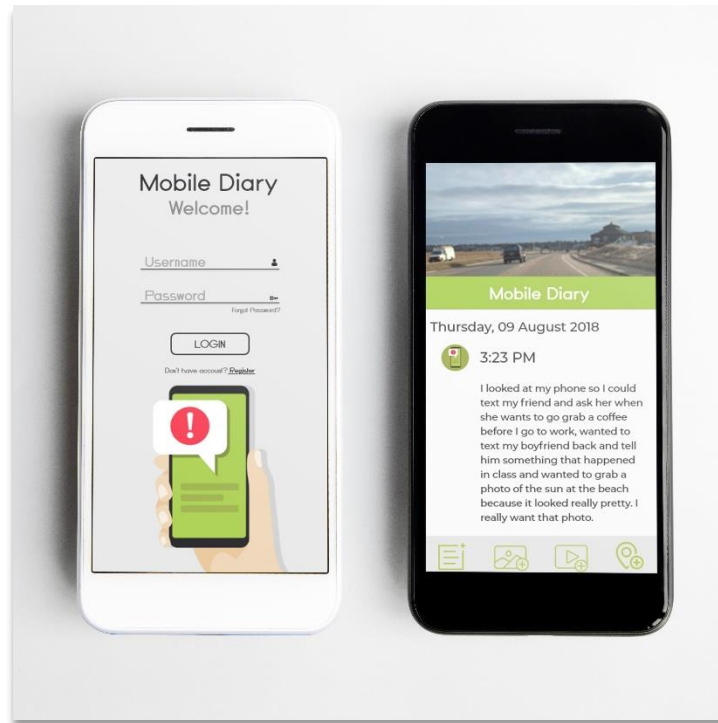


Fig 3-1: Mobile Diary Application Visual

Custom Mobile Diary Application

A custom mobile diary application was developed and utilized for this study. This application was easily accessible by tapping the application icon on a mobile phone, and allowed the participants to capture text, images, even video in real-time. The user interface was very simple so as to provide each participant with clear and intuitive instruction. Several features were incorporated into the design of the mobile

diary application which are described below. The images also give a visual representation of the mobile diary application user interface and features available to participants:

Recognizable Mobile Application Icon: The imagery / logo used for the mobile application icon was bright and recognizable so that participants could easily locate the app icon in the midst of other icons on their mobile phone screens. The logo which included a hand holding the mobile device, the speech bubble, and the exclamation point icon were also indicative of the tasks at hand as a participant in this study.

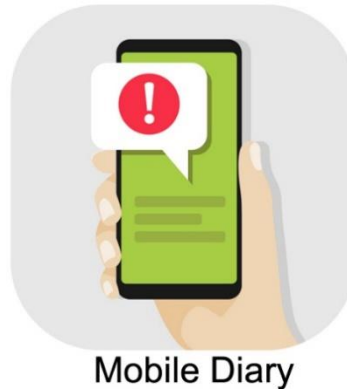


Fig 3-2: Mobile Application Icon

Login Screen: After clicking on the mobile application icon to activate the mobile application, participants were taken to a login screen. The login screen offered the same ‘look and feel’ with the continuity of the logo so participants felt at ease entering the username and password they were provided at the beginning of the study.

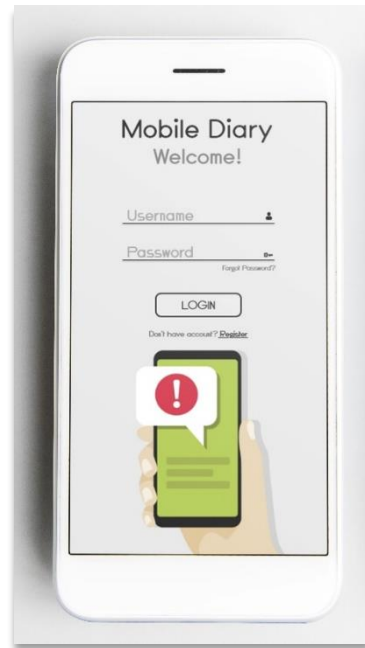


Fig 3-3: Mobile Diary Application Login Screen

Mobile Diary User Interface: The actual diary interface was designed to be as user-friendly as possible. The date and time were automatically recorded and participants could choose to upload a photo, video or audio, and location with the simple click of a button.



Fig 3-4: Mobile Diary Application User-Interface

Location: The location feature was a voluntary add-on to the mobile diary application. If participants chose to, they could click the icon at the bottom of the diary page and record their exact location at the time of the diary entry.

Information Capture: As the researcher, I had the opportunity to login into the administrative dashboard to view diary entries and other uploads in real-time.

Procedures

As stated by Bolger et al. (2003, p. 579-80), diaries allow the researcher to capture data in situ as diaries are self-reporting instruments that are capable of recording “ongoing experiences... [and] ... offer the opportunity to investigate social, psychological, and physiological processes within everyday situations.” The mobile diary app developed for this particular research study followed the event-contingent protocol (Wheeler and Reis, 1991) which requires participants to “provide a self-report each time the event in question occurs,” which enables the investigation and analyzation of “specialized occurrences that would not necessarily be captured by fixed or random interval assessments” (Bolger et. al, 2003, p. 588).

Participants were asked to make a diary entry when they found themselves reaching for their mobile devices. They were prompted to record whatever came to mind including the uploading of photos, audio or video recordings, and location at the time of the entry. The date and time of entry were automatically recorded.

Participants were encouraged to report things such as why they reached for their mobile device; what they did when they engaged with the device; why they engaged with the device in that particular way; and how did they feel while engaging with the device during that specific event.

Although this research utilized the event-contingent protocol, I still pinged each participant four times per day (randomly) and asked them to comment on the last time they remembered resorting to their mobile device. I did this to provide a constant reminder to participants in this study given that the maintenance of a mobile diary is a self-reporting initiative which requires effort and engagement by the participant.

Study Participants

Similar to the depth interviews, purposive sampling was also used for the mobile diary participants. I selected two key informants from the depth interviews to participate in the mobile diary study allowing for real-time collection of in-depth data further exploring these contextual dimensions and resultant consumption behavior while capturing the ‘in situ’ experience.

The informants were chosen because they provided open and honest insights into feelings and behaviors and provided valuable information into contexts and behaviors present while using their mobile devices. I felt that these particular participants would be essential in providing rich data that would allow for even deeper analysis. Once again, the participants were between 18-35 years of age, heavy users of technology, and owned a smartphone.

I emailed the selected contacts from my depth interviews using the *Mobile Diary Recruitment Email* found in Appendix C. A signed consent form as illustrated in Appendix D was required for each participant before the mobile diary research commenced. The mobile diary study participants each received \$50 for their participation for the week.

Profile of Participants – Mobile Diary Study				
Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Occupation	# of Inquiries
Sierra	22	F	MBA Graduate Student	3
Braden	31	M	Social Media Specialist	3

Table 3-2: Profile of Participants, Mobile Diary Study

Data Analysis

Introduction

Qualitative Content Analysis is well-suited to my research analysis needs. While content analysis is a research method, it is also used way to analyze data from content derived from depth interviews, diaries, etc. Content analysis is defined as a “careful, detailed, systematic examination and interpretation of a particular body of material in an effort to identify patterns, themes, assumptions, and meanings” (Lune and Berg, 2017, p. 182). As my goals include gaining knowledge and an understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Downe-Wambolt, 1992) as well as an understanding of social reality in an introspective yet scientific way, content analysis is fitting tool for my particular research.

History of Content Analysis

With roots based in quantitative research, early definitions describe the methodology as “a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (Berelson, 1952, p.18). Early 20th century researchers used content analysis as an analytical tool to look at textual content from “hymns, newspaper and magazine articles, political speeches, advertisements, and folktales and riddles” (Cho & Lee, 2014, p.3; Elo & Kyngas, 2008; Harwood & Garry, 2003).

In the mid-20th century, however, the quantitative aspect of content analysis began to be disparaged due to the limitations of breaking text down into over-simplified and quantifiable units during the analysis stage (Cho & Lee, 2014). Kracauer (1952) was a proponent of moving away from the quantitative approach and moving towards a more holistic approach that allowed for meanings and insight to emerge. He argued that (1) A ‘one-sided reliance on quantitative content analysis may lead to a neglect of qualitative explorations, thus reducing the accuracy of analysis; (2) The assumptions underlying quantitative analysis tend to preclude a judicious appraisal of the important role which qualitative considerations may play in communications research, hence the need for theoretical reorientation; and (3) The potentialities of communications research can be developed only if, as the result of such a reorientation, the emphasis is shifted from quantitative to qualitative procedures’ (p. 631). Thus, the formation of Qualitative Content Analysis emerged from this examination and has become a means of analysis for “systematically describing the meaning of qualitative material” (Schreier, 2012, p. 1).

Analysis Procedures & Guidelines

A key reason Qualitative Content Analysis was chosen for my research was due to the flexibility of using a combination of both inductive and deductive reasoning. One was not chosen in lieu of the other, but rather worked synchronously to provide a rich and relevant piece of research.

Deductive reasoning allowed for initial categories or themes to be derived from existing literature, theory and research. Berg (2001) posits that the formation and utilization of concepts and variables from previous literature, theory and research is beneficial, particularly in the early stages of data collection and analysis. Inductive reasoning allowed for the merging of raw data into meaningful categories and themes.

Further benefit of a Qualitative Content Analysis approach specific to my research was the capability of analyzing both manifest and latent content. Again, one should not be used at the expense of the other, but rather simultaneously to provide rich interpretation. Manifest content involved looking at and coding the visibly evident, literal surface materials within the raw data. Latent content involved discerning the underlying meaning within the data. Latent content required me as the researcher to also take context into account. As Lune and Berg (2017, p. 177) posit, "... manifest analysis describes the visible content (text), while latent analysis seeks to discern its meaning (subtext)." To give a basic example, Schreier (2012) describes the literal meaning of a passage which openly praises George W. Bush on the Iraq war. If this passage was from Fox News, it would be taken literally. If, on the other hand, the passage was found in a magazine such as *Mad* (a satirical magazine in the US), you would discern the meaning to be just the opposite.

Hsieh and Shannon (2005) describe three varying approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis: conventional, directed, and summative analysis. Even though these approaches are delineated here for purposes of clarification, I utilized the three approaches simultaneously during my research. As Lune and Berg (2001, p. 174) posit, "In actual research, you do not just choose one approach to the exclusion of the other."

Conventional Qualitative Content Analysis was used here as the aim of the study was to describe a phenomenon. The conventional approach calls for analysis to begin in the early stages of data collection to allow for fluid movement between concept development and data collection. In contrast to the usage of preconceived categories (Kondracki and Wellman, 2002), conventional analysis uses inductive category development where categories emerge directly from the data (Mayring, 2000). This process helped contour subsequent collection of data, therefore refining the relation to my research questions.

My goal of using a directed approach was to "validate or extend conceptually a theoretical framework or theory" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1281). Directed Qualitative Content Analysis lends itself to the deductive level reasoning in that existing literature, research, or theory such as a liminality framework for considering consumption provided a foundation for theme or category development.

I used a summative approach to discern latent meanings or themes presented in the raw data. The summative approach began with a manifest content analysis by looking at specific usage of words or content. After this step, the process moved to latent analysis, or attention to uncovering underlying meaning within the raw data. "It

allows for interpretation of the context associated with the use of the word or phrase (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1285). As participants also uploaded images and videos as part of the Mobile Diary Study, I discussed these visual elements with participants during the follow-up interviews. Thus, the discussion of the visuals was able to be translated into text and further analyzed.

Analyzing Data

Taking the intricacies of Qualitative Content Analysis into consideration for this research, I utilized a comprehensive model of qualitative analytic activities adapted from Hsieh and Shannon (2005), Zhang and Wildemuth (2009), Berg and Lune (2012), and Lune and Berg (2017) which helped guide my analytical process. My data analysis followed Qualitative Content Analysis' thematic approach and was an ongoing process. Data collection and data analysis were woven together. As Kozinets (2010) describes other iterative approaches, analysis encompasses a "detailed examination of a whole by breaking it into its constituent parts and comparing them in different ways" (p. 118). When looking to define the basic unit of text to be classified during content analysis, "themes" were used as the coding unit which Minichiello, et al. (1990) describe as seeking the expressions of an idea. Beginning with the deductive reasoning approach, initial categories and themes were derived from existing literature and research. An inductive reasoning approach followed as themes emerged from the data after thorough examination, a process which gives notice to unique themes that highlight the nuances of the phenomena.

Throughout this process, relevant themes were extracted from the data, and the coding scheme underwent a continuous evolution throughout the process of data analysis as inductive and deductive category development were used in this body of research.

The categorical analysis was a progression. During the initial reading of field notes and transcripts, several first-order terms and concepts emerged (Van Maanen, 1979). As previously noted, this process is a continuous evolution, thus the data was analyzed again. At this stage, additional interviews took place, and more secondary sources were referenced. Also, a secondary scan of the literature occurred.

Overlapping categories were merged to form second-order, theoretical labels to the emergent themes. This worked to capture themes at a higher level of abstraction.

Relationships between categories were formulated, patterns were uncovered, and the categories were tested against full range of data (Bradley, 1993). When an identified theme garnered enough supportive evidence, a theme was then identified as a reportable “finding.” The second-order themes were then assembled into aggregate analytical dimensions, thus organizing emerging findings. The analysis continued by considering the patterns in light of relevant literature and/or theory and showcased possible links to theory or other research.

Research Integrity

Introduction

The way in which research is evaluated in terms of quality varies by inquiry paradigm. For example, standard and accepted positivist paradigm criteria to evaluate research

include validity, reliability, and objectivity. As Zhang and Widlemuth (2009, p. 6) reiterate, however, Qualitative Content Analysis is an interpretive data analysis method differing from the positivist paradigm in its “fundamental assumptions, research purposes, and inference process,” thus making these standard criteria “unsuitable for judging [qualitative content analysis] research results” (p. 6). As a result, throughout this research several steps were taken to ensure the integrity of the research process. Particularly, I utilized three criteria including credibility, confirmability, and trustworthiness of transcripts.

Credibility

As defined by Bradley (1993, p. 436), credibility denotes the “adequate representations of the constructions of the social world under study.” To solidify the credibility of my particular research, credibility was achieved through persistent observation (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), prolonged engagement where ample time is spent in the field understanding the phenomena being studied, interpretation that is analyzed by checking against the raw data itself, and also by utilizing a clear and transparent process for coding and analyzing the raw data which this chapter describes in much detail. A solid coding scheme was also developed (Folger, Hewes and Poole, 1984) as the study uses rigorous methods to achieve a sound and consistent coding scheme from the inception of the research process.

Trustworthiness of Transcripts

McCracken (1998) and Patton (1990) stress the importance of “verbatim” translations of all depth interviews. To ensure verbatim transcriptions of all recorded interviews, Landmark Associates, Inc services were used. Inevitably, though, there will be non-verbal cues during each interview that an audio translation will not capture (Fontana and Frey, 1994). Other emotional context cues may involve inflection of voice, sighs and laughter.

Mayring (2014) describes nonverbal aspects and context as viable units of analysis within Qualitative Content Analysis as basic verbatim transcriptions of interviews, focus groups, etc. are limited. Mayring posits that other elements aside from language itself can “enrich the text with additional aspects” (p. 45).

Observations and field notes taken during interviews are ripe for analysis with examples including laughter, rise or fall of pitch, the emotional state of the participants, and even participants’ “cultural or social background” (p. 52).

To address this element of academic rigor, observational field notes and journal entries written with thick description were taken according to protocol set for by Bernard (2002). These measures were taken to ensure that the “full flavor of the interview as a lived experience” were recorded, taking into account environmental and emotional context as well as the researcher’s observations and musings. When collecting the field notes and journal entries, the focus was on four different types of nonverbal communication significant to this particular research as quoted by Fontana and Frey (1994, p. 335):

Proxemic communication is the use of interpersonal space to communicate attitudes; *chronemics* communication is the use of pacing of speech and length of

silence in conversation; *kinesic* communication includes any body movements or postures; and *paralinguistic* communication includes all the variations in volume, pitch and quality of voice.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Through analysis of the interview and mobile diary data, using liminality as a sensitizing theoretical framework, themes emerged that can help form a better understanding of how people consume and behave while using a mobile phone. These themes are Leisure Entitlement, Sociability, Anti-Structure, Communitas, Escapism, and Guilty Pleasure.

I included select quotes from participants so as to better substantiate the essence and depth of the data as it revealed its nuances and intricacies. The depth interview analyses are intertwined with the mobile diary data if both data collection methods helped to inform a particular finding. The depth interviews and mobile diary studies provided triangulation to inform and support the research focus.

Leisure Entitlement

Leisure Entitlement has been articulated within liminality studies and consumer research literature and understood as an individuals' right to leisure time, free from obligations to work and other individuals (Taheri, et al, 2016). I found my participants using their mobile phone as a means of leisure. They express that the mobile phone enables them to take advantage of leisure breaks for which they feel entitled:

... I just want to relax for a bit. I deserve it after what I've been through today! Turning to my phone is my reprieve – it is my source of enjoyment and entertainment that total relaxes me and allows me to just “be” while listening to music and scrolling through my social feeds... After my meeting and before my next appointment (while I was walking down the hallway) I turned to my phone to relax, enjoy, and celebrate my accomplishment. (Braden)

I asked Braden during our follow up depth interview to describe this particular moment. He explained that he had just facilitating a stressful board meeting with company ‘big whigs’ present. He was under pressure having to answer rapid fire question after question. As this participant was describing this occurrence, I could see the anguish in his face at the onset of his story followed by subsequent relief when a leisurely virtual space was ‘rightfully’ being entered. This theme was prevalent in the data from both mobile diary studies along with the multitude of depth interviews conducted. The desire to use a mobile phone was frequently described as a right or privilege that was ‘earned’ and ‘deserved’ by the individual. The data also revealed that participants specifically chose what activity to engage in when entering this space:

I deserve to relax after this day... an exam followed by a group presentation – my group was useless and I did the majority of the work. I am excited to be picking up my phone to see what is happening with my friends on snapchat. Snapchat is my “go to” mode when I need to get away and enjoy myself. (Lily)

When further articulating leisure time, Turner (1974, p.68) describes two types of freedoms associated with it: *freedom from* and *freedom to*. Leisure-time represents *freedom from* “a whole heap of institutional obligations prescribed by the basic forms of social” as well as freedom from “the forced, chronologically regulated rhythms of factory and office and a chance to recuperate and enjoy natural, biological rhythms again.” This subversion of elements that restrict leisure was evident in the data.

Leisure-time also represents *freedom to* enter, “even to generate new symbolic worlds of entertainment, sports, games, diversions of all kinds” and freedom to “transcend social structural limitations” and play.

Participants in this research study clearly express seeking the freedom from the rigors of everyday life and engage in leisure-driven consumption activities as evidenced by the mobile diary entry by Sierra:

I’m still at work and I’m so bored. I need to get away, but I can’t physically leave the building or my office space. This happens a lot, and when it does I turn to my phone to escape. It takes me to a place where I can just relax and just catch a break and my breathe for a little while and get away from all the stress I feel at work. I am going to scroll through all of my social media right now and also see what sales are trending on Instagram. I love to look at the fun pictures of dresses... (Sierra)

To accompany the diary post, Sierra uploaded an image of a floral water bottle in front of a window. During our follow up interview, I asked Sierra specifically regarding the image she uploaded. She was talking about working and being stressed, yet she posted a picture of a water bottle to accompany her diary entry. She described taking that picture of the water bottle because it signified that she was at work but was really looking to *enter into a new place* – one that was pretty and satisfying like the pattern on the water bottle. She also alluded to the idea that the picture was taken out her office window which indicated freedom from her current situation. Her decision and entitled right to enter a virtual, transitional place that could help her remove herself from the stress of work was represented by that water bottle in front of the window.

Participants also expressed the freedom to create diversions and new symbolic worlds:

I'm far too old, but I must admit that I play *Plants Vs. Zombies* all the time throughout the day. I have a yard that zombies try to get in so they can enter my house and cause me to lose. So I plant plants that try to attack the zombies... I feel competitive and love to win against the zombies. It's my own little world and I secretly love it. Just me and the phone playing against me... haha – my own little place. (Carrie)

Carrie's creation of her own little place through *Plants v Zombies* as described above touches on these concepts. As described by Turner, one *works* at the liminal, and one *plays* with the liminoid. Apter and Kerr (1991, p. 14) describe play as a "state of mind... where we create a small and manageable private world... in which, temporarily at least nothing outside has any significance and ... one feels basically secure and unthreatened from the problems of the real world." An element of play is what Turner describes as 'flow.' Flow is the 'holistic sensation present when we act with total involvement.' Csikszentmihalyi (2014) describes it as a "state in which action follows action according to an internal logic which seems to need no conscious intervention on our part ... we experience it as a unified flowing from one moment to the next, in which we feel in control of our actions, and in which there is little distinction between self and environment; between stimulus and response; or between past, present, and future" (p. 136-7). As my interviews progressed and themes were being discussed in more detail, participants began to colorfully describe being completely engrossed in the use of their mobile phones:

I feel so free during these times – I feel like I'm blocking the whole world out.. like I have tunnel vision on my phone – sometimes I don't even hear someone who may be talking to me in person. I won't even hear them, really. I feel like I enter into a space that puts me in my own world. (Elizabeth)

When I just walking around town between meetings and am looking at my phone, I find myself kind of zoned out, smiling, and not really paying attention to

anything around me. I check my social media, listen to music and play online games. For those split seconds, I kind of forget about all my worries and things to do and just relax. (Jillian)

Braden described his purposive *entitled entry* into a state of mind where he can relax, enjoy and celebrate after his board meeting through his mobile diary entry and photo upload. Through her mobile diary entry, Sierra detailed turning to her phone to look at sales on Instagram because *she can* and is *entitled to escape* to ‘catch a break and her breath for a little while’ while subverting the trappings of her physical office.

Behaviors including the *freedom to create* also came to the forefront during analysis. Carrie created ‘her own little place’ with the game, *Plants vs. Zombies*. Elizabeth and Jillian experience total *engrossment* in the creation of a virtual place that allows them to block out the noise and transition into a space that ‘puts [them] in their own world.’

Sociability

Analysis of my data indicated the frequent tendency and preference for participants to engage in sociability, even when the individual is physically alone. Cheek and Buss (1981, p. 330) describe sociability as the “tendency to affiliate with others and to prefer being with others to remaining alone.” The proliferation of mobile devices allow individuals to be connected with a simple and single touch of a screen, anytime and anywhere – even if not in the physical presence of another person. Geser (2006) posits that the ubiquity of mobile technology predicates a situation where a “more fluid culture of informal social interaction therefore can emerge.”

Campbell, Ling, and Bayer (2014) argue that mobile technology has become a ‘basic element of social life’ and is prevalent as a social practice. Mobile technology allows individuals to be connected to their extended network throughout the day. Elizabeth and Katherine provide evidence in their depth interviews that indicates this tendency and preference:

I’m on my phone throughout the day to check in with my friends on snapchat and stay connected. I feel like I also need to be in touch to see what my friends and family members are up to. (Elizabeth)

Every time I leave a class, I need to check my phone to see who has contacted me. I need to stay up to date with what is going on with my contacts when I am busy. (Katherine)

Anti-Structure & Communitas

Mobile phone usage was recorded by participants as a social space that allowed a fleeting respite from the otherwise obligatory roles, demands and challenges of a structured society. According to Turner, this social space is a temporary state so that society can perpetuate its organized being with a variable of the anti-structural being *communitas*. Within liminoid phenomena, individuals often experience *communitas*, which has been described as a collectively experienced sense of boundless togetherness. Evidence from my data shows that my participants are experiencing *communitas*.

More specifically, *spontaneous* *communitas* are temporary states, detached from social structures, where individuals become “totally absorbed into a single, synchronized, fluid event” (Turner, 1982, p. 48). Lugosi (2007, p. 167) describes

spontaneous communitas as “temporary states of affectual bonding created through direct interaction” which signify “blissful togetherness apart from structure.” Turner asks (1974 p. 79), “Is there any of us who has not known this moment when compatible people – friends, congeners – obtain a flash of lucid mutual understanding on the existential level, when they feel that all problems (not just their problems), whether emotional or cognitive, could be resolved, if only the group which is felt (in the first person) as ‘essentially us’ could sustain its inter-subjective illumination?”

The quote below from Cheryl highlights her preference to spontaneously enter into virtual games with her friends where she can readily experience this ‘blissful togetherness apart from structure.’ During the interview she particularly highlighted the ability to engage in this activity at any given moment when the mood struck her and her virtual acquaintances:

When life gets to be too much, I love to look to my phone to communicate with my friends on Game Pigeon – this is through imessage. Any friends that I find online at that given moment – we play games like 8 Ball, Sea Battle, Basketball, Darts, Archery, Paintball, Crazy 8... I start to text someone and click the second icon on the left of the text. Once clicked, you can select game pigeon and then choose a game of your choice to play with your friends who are connected at the same time... I am at peace when playing these games. I can connect and just enjoy myself! (Cheryl)

As the depth interview process evolved, several participants described the euphoria of emergence into states where spontaneous communitas readily emerge. As Turner (1974, p. 79) describes, this behavior of creating and engaging in spontaneous communitas is a “direct, immediate and total confrontation of human identities.” Celia described this spontaneous moment in time that she shared with her friends as they laughed in ‘blissful togetherness’ at the Instagram memes:

I don't care where I am or what I'm doing. When a meme pops up on my phone that makes me almost die laughing, I just need to share it with my friends who also appreciate a solid meme... We laugh for hours... one of my favorites that we still laugh at are all the Nicholas Cage ones... When I need a good laugh and bonding moment with people who think like me, this is where I go. Nik Cage [laughing]... (Celia).

Another significant theme that emerged as the data analysis process evolved was the need to resort to mobile phone use when more physical, in-person interactions incited psychological discomfort. Przybylski and Weinstein (2013) find that the mere presence of a mobile phone hinders the quality and closeness of a face-to-face conversation. This trend was overwhelmingly evident in the data as participants relayed using mobile technology and entry into a virtual place in an effort to feel socially acceptable:

I turn to my phone when I need to escape an awkward situation like while waiting for someone by myself. For some reason, it is more acceptable to be standing alone if you have your phone out than to be standing alone without it. (Will)

If I have to go eat but my friends aren't ready and I have to eat by myself, I will use my phone. At least that way it gets rid of the nerves of people judging you for being alone. It looks like you are preoccupied. (Toby)

The distinct behaviors associated with the characteristic of sociability are evident in the data. The importance of *connecting together while alone* was highlighted in TJ's streaks. *Spontaneous social bonding* can be found in Cheryl's use of *Game Pigeon* and Celia's sharing of memes. *Avoidance behaviors* in order to feel socially acceptable are also evidenced by Will's escape of an awkward situation and Toby's appearance of being preoccupied.

Escapism

The evaluation of my data strongly referenced the need of participants to escape: escape from the grinds of daily life; escape from reality; escape from the pressures of the workplace; escape from boredom.

Katherine describes her escape from the rigors of everyday life, highlighting the preference of individuals to engage in leisure-driven consumption activities while engaging in mobile phone usage while escaping from current conditions:

Even though I am waiting in line at Starbucks, I literally feel like I'm at the Border Collie dog show. I am sooooo there right now. I have 2 Border Collies – This one specific Border Collie in the video is going through the hurdles, and it is so cute. It's a great obstacle course and she gets the best time and form of the entire group. Someone on Insta [Instagram] said, "Someone get her an NFL contract!" 1, 064,482 people have seen it, and 3,218 people have posted comments. I find myself reading through the comments as if I was standing there in person. (Katherine)

Jillian also describes a transitional state imbuing escapism:

I am at a sporting event for my little sister. I am much older than her and try to be a part of her world as much as I can. However, I am so totally bored by little kids playing soccer (sorry, haha). I just need a distraction sometimes during these games and I often find myself looking through my Instagram feed to see the images I have captured. It helps me to remember what I did and what kinds of things brought enjoyment to my life. And then, "oh ya" ... back to the soccer game... but at least I was able to experience my vacation to Cancun from last year all over again. I literally felt like I was right back at the resort. I could smell the suntan lotion and feel the sting of my sunburn (apparently the sunscreen I was smelling was on other people and not my own red skin haha). (Jillian)

Escapism was a frequent recurring theme in the data, particularly the need to escape from stressful situations, or situations that caused discomfort of the participants. As articulated by Addis and Holbrook (2010, p. 826), involvement in engaging activities can allow individuals to escape by "becoming completely absorbed

and transported as they enter into a state of full psychological immersion.” My research indicates that participants’ engagement with their mobile phones provides the foundation and outlet for this full psychological immersion. I shared the story of Will turning to his phone when he needed to ‘escape an awkward situation’ previously in this chapter. Similar to that story is the information shared by Jesse where he specifically describes his need to ‘escape from feeling awkward’ during times of discomfort:

When I am in a public setting but alone, I pull out my phone to try to escape from feeling awkward. I feel like if I’m on my phone, I look occupied and don’t look as uncomfortable as I feel. If I no one to talk to in person, my phone is an escape from forced interactions that I don’t want a part of or even worse – standing alone. (Jesse)

As evidenced in the quote above, my data revealed that escapism via mobile technologies provides a means to alleviate social realities, if only temporarily. The “nightmare of repetition and daily work stress found in everyday life provide many consumers with a motivation for escapism, which brings about feelings of disassociation from reality and can provide feelings of both freedom and pleasure” (Labrecque et al, p. 460; Rojek, 1993). My data shows that this disassociation from reality through escaping and subsequent feelings of relief are found when engaging with the mobile phone:

I picked up my phone as I was walking across the street... I looked at social – just Instagram, and then my messages. I want to get my mind off actually going into the office as I really don’t wanna go in today. I also want to take my mind off of all the things that I have to get done while at work today and then after work. And it worked – I feel so much more relaxed now. (Sierra)

When talking with Sierra about this mobile diary post in the follow up interview, she reiterated that when she's walking and looking at her social like she describes above, she loses track of reality, time and space and immerses and transitions herself into 'her virtual place.' She also says that it is one of the times that she can feel at peace with all that is on her plate in the 'real world.'

Participants even referenced the need to escape from environmental and physiological unpleasantities such as back pain or headaches. Whether it be too hot or too cold, too crowded or too isolated, participants all retreated to mobile technology to escape:

It's so cold. I can barely breathe. I'm pickup up my phone to check my social media to take my mind off of the weather. (Doug)

Sometimes I feel like my head just hurts and I need to take a break from doing things that I have to actually think about which is why I turn to social media. (Celia)

Also interesting was the description of utilizing the mobile phone to escape painful situations. Participants described how they coped with anguish by engaging with an image or video by adding filters, changing color images to black and white renditions, or collecting several images into a meaning-making collage. Lily talked of her dog's recent passing and the specific behaviors she used to help ease the pain:

My dog recently died. She was 11 years old and was my true companion. I find myself thinking of her all throughout the day, especially when I'm bored or doing something I really don't want to be doing. Every moment I have, I put more pictures into the Instagram collage I have of her. It helps me heal, and also helps me look back on our memories so I never forget. I also share these pictures with my contacts so they can see how much she meant to me also. (Lily)

The characteristic of escapism spurred the exhibition of behaviors while using a mobile phone include Jesse's story of *immersion and diversion* while immersing himself in his phone in order to divert an awkward situation. Sierra's *disassociation from reality* was evident in her story of trying to escape from the pressures of work. *Retreating behavior* was also evident in the data as evidenced by Doug's turn to social media and Lily's retreat to Instagram to remember her dog.

Guilty Pleasure

Even though the participants indicated that turning to their mobile phones provided a respite from the daily grind and a way to escape from pressures of everyday life through leisure-like activities, a surprising finding was that in the midst of the pleasure gained, the guilt associated with it was overwhelming. A prominent theme that emerged from the data included the negative associations the participants felt when turning to their mobile phones. The data clearly revealed that participants were ill at ease and experienced forms of anxiety:

I really should be cleaning my house and doing laundry. I only have a limited amount of free time away from work and my kids – I really have no excuse. It's hard to describe the guilt I feel, but it is certainly there. If I could just make myself be productive around the house while I have the chance, than I could spend more time with my family later. However, I just need to get away for a second, so I turn to Facebook. (Judy)

Judy continued to describe that while she did experience feelings of pleasure and relief when on facebook, she also felt distinct feelings of guilt and anxiety that lingered throughout her time on the social media platform. She described that even though she was clearly aware that she should be doing something else that would

improve her life (like focus on her studies to earn her graduate degree while parenting at the same time), she was attached and just couldn't turn away from facebook.

When further probing the participants as the interview process went on, it became more evident that the combination of relief and pleasure derived from mobile phone use was intertwined by feelings of guilt and anxiety. Many indicated that the guilt stemmed from the fact that they were attached (almost addicted) to their virtual places and transitory states. Regardless of whatever else they needed to accomplish, there were times that they just couldn't put it down (both the mobile phone and their mobile 'place') regardless of the consequences. One participant specifically shared that she felt like she was almost forced somehow to continue to engage within her 'online place' even though she was acutely aware that it would do more harm than good. She described that this addictive behavior and attachment increased her levels of guilt and anxiety. As indicated below by Toby, he also expressed feelings of guilt:

... I really think that I literally cannot live without it. I waste so much damn time on my phone – I could be so much more productive! (Toby)

Bowlby (1969) defined attachment as a "lasting psychological connectedness between human beings" (p. 194) with four key components which include a safe haven, a secure base, proximity maintenance, and separation distress. Attachment theory, pioneered by Bowlby and extended by his colleague Ainsworth, has been widely used to explain why early childhood relationships with parents have such a profound and enduring effect on personal development. Attachment theory holds a significant place within psychology while focusing mainly on interpersonal relationships. Attachment theory is well grounded and thoroughly looked at within

academic research and has also been applied to several domains outside of psychology including both consumer behavior and marketing.

In fact, attachment theory has seen relevance within marketing and lends itself to understanding the formation and development of people's important relationships with consumption objects. The theory has been expanded in several studies including Belk's (1988) look at the meanings consumers attach to possessions; Rubinstein and Parmelle's (1992) look at attachments to places; Hirschman's (1994) look at emotional attachments to pets; and Thomson's (2006) look at attachment in relation to celebrities. It is a natural progression to look at the emotional attachment consumers feel towards their mobile devices.

The mobile phone is personal (Varadarajan et. al 2010) and is contextually situated within the lives of consumers. It is not just a technological gadget, but a cultural object as well, and has become a part of everyday traditions and practices among a wide variety of consumers. The mobile phone is centrally situated and closely integrated within the lives of the consumers and is almost never out of reach. Users form close personal relationships with the mobile phones and use the phones not only for utilitarian purposes, but also as a means of self-expression. Tendencies for individuals to use mobile devices as a source of emotional support are on the rise. Rippin (2005) substantiates these suppositions by reporting on a study by Michael Hulme within the UK which showed that "72% of users are obsessed with their mobiles and 86% of users feel anxious without it; 46% of respondents aged 25-34 even liken the loss of their mobile to a bereavement" (p. 38). Evidence of this level of attachment was present throughout this research:

My phone is the last thing I touch and interact with before I go to bed, and the very first thing that I reach for when I wake up in the morning. More often than not, I find myself sleeping with my phone next to my pillow – never more than an arms length away from at all times... even when I'm unconscious. (Carrie)

If I can't find my phone I FREAK OUT. Literally. I depend on it. Multiple times throughout the day I use my phone to communicate with my friends and family... I constantly find myself looking at the weather... I use the calculator during college exams, listen to music, engage with the GPS, set reminders, use my camera to record images and videos along the way. I play games... ok, I sound really sad, but my phone is literally attached to my body day and night. (Karen)

Another key observation in this research involves the physical attachment of the individual to the mobile device, even while the device is not in use. A previous pilot observational study recorded repeated observations showcase individuals physically connected to the devices, holding them while eating, walking, talking, and engaging in a variety of other social activities:

I am immediately struck by the two ladies sitting diagonally across from me. They are eating salads, both are dressed nicely, hair neat. Approximately 35 years of age. They are clearly involved in a very active conversation – faces are animated, hands are waving back and forth. They both have mobile phones present. Lady #1 has the phone resting on the table next to her plate of food. Lady #2 (the most animated/hand-waving of the two) has her mobile phone in her hand. She never uses it or looks at it, but it remains waving around in her hand the entire time. At one point, she passes it into the other hand – but never, ever letting go... I am struck by Lady #2 as her phone seems to be a part of her physicality – attached and moving with her at all times.

This same observation was noted while conducting the in-depth interviews for this particular research. As interviews were in progress, participants rarely let go of the mobile device. I clearly noted and referenced the physical attachment of the device to each participant I interviewed. From sitting face down on the table in front of him,

to resting in the palm of her hands throughout, it was clear that the device had become a part of the physicality of the participant.

When further deciphering these feelings of guilt and anxiety mixed in with the pleasure and relief while using the mobile phone, another theme that emerged to provide understanding of this combination was the participants' need to fill every moment of time. Indicative of the changing social landscape ushered in by the proliferation of mobile technology, a shift in culture from languid moments and periods of 'down time' has transformed into a rapid-fire need to fill every second of time. University of Alabama professor of anthropology, Christopher Lynn, compared manipulating a mobile device to smoking a cigarette. Lynn says, "When you're habituated to constant stimulation, when you lack it, you sort of don't know what to do with yourself... When we aren't used to having down time, it results in anxiety. 'Oh my god, I should be doing something.' And we reach for the smartphone. It's our omnipresent relief from that" (Gross, 2012). This trend was clearly evident in my data as the vast majority of participants described resorting to technology during periods of 'emptiness' because they didn't know what else to do – yet they needed to *do something*:

I'm walking from my office to my car. I'm in Boston today for a meeting and parked about 4 blocks away. It feels weird to just walk – I have the urge to do something or occupy myself in some way, so I turn to my phone. Checking out my WEEI app. If I can't listen to the boys on the radio, I may as well catch up on other sports happenings... It's my own world. (Braden)

Another theme that emerged to lend understanding to the Guilty Pleasure combination was the anxiety participants felt if they weren't continuously connected

and up-to-date. This constant availability of mobile technology and infrastructure precipitates a ‘constant presence’ and ‘always on’ mentality that allows immediate access between numerous individuals, even though access is structurally uncoordinated (Lee and Liebenau, 2001, p. 268; Burchell, 2015). It isn’t just the possibility of being in constant contact with other individuals, but rather the always-on nature of the phenomenon. The need to be ever-accessible with resultant anxiety was evident in my research:

I check my phone all the time to catch myself up on any texts and snaps I missed. My Insta and Twitter feed usually has a lot of posts as well, so after reading them I really feel caught up. But again, I need to keep checking regularly so I don’t miss something. What if something happened in the world – or what if one of my contacts need something from me? If I don’t respond or act right away, I may miss a valuable opportunity. (Doug)

This trend of an anxiety-driven need to be ever-connected was present during my actual depth interviews as well. During one specific interview, I needed to pause to sneeze a few times. While I was in the midst of this and grabbing a tissue, I noticed that the participant immediately saw an opening and picked up his phone and began interacting with it. I extended my sneezing recovery to give the participant a bit more time of interaction. When the interview resumed, he apologized to me. I specifically asked the gentleman what prompted him to pick up his phone, and also what activity did he engage it for those few short minutes? He responded as follows:

It’s Friday afternoon and I needed to check to see what is going on with my friends. I’m afraid that if I don’t check in, I may miss the plans for tonight. Picking up my phone when I had a second was natural – I didn’t even give it a thought until you just brought it up. I guess I do this a lot during the day. I just can’t miss anything. (Stevie)

Stevie continued to explain that even if were just for a few minutes, he removed himself from our interview and went to another 'place.' He apologized because he felt badly that he lost track of what we were talking about, but he just needed to get away for a bit while he had a chance.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Mobile communication has become “irreversibly interwoven into the flow of social life” with the mobile device becoming a “core part of the ‘kit’ that is necessary for contemporary life” (Bayer et al., 2015, p. 129). Yet, despite the attention given to the mobile device from an academic perspective, complexity and ubiquity makes the device “difficult to explain, even more so to study” (Reyes, 2016, p. 417). My goal with this dissertation is to better understand consumption and behaviors associated with using mobile devices.

The increasing ubiquity of mobile technologies has placed new and unique challenges on marketers in terms of how and when to reach consumers. Benerjee and Dholakia (2013, p. 531) posit that mobile technologies have “accelerated technological and marketplace ubiquity.” Gao, Rau, and Salvendy (2009) speak of ubiquity as being on the move and ‘portable,’ moving beyond spatial and temporal reach. Consumers are engaging in ubiquitous consumption with access to resources and information while ‘on the go’ and have become very discerning in terms of seeking out information that is relevant to them at any given time. As argued by Daniel Newman (2014), the highly engaged, modern-day, connected consumer puts increasing pressure on the marketer:

With this transformation has come a new set of rules, breeding marketers with a hybrid capability to not be just focused on one type of marketing, whether it be direct, digital, or retail, but rather a marketer that understands experience, and how consumers are seeking ubiquity. From their cell phone to their desktop to an

instore visit; we are entering an omni-channel world, where consumers seek an omni-channel experience (p. 2).

Newman's argument highlights that consumers are now requiring a 'multi-path experience in an omni-channel environment.' Dessart et al. (2016, p. 11) further clarify and define modern-day consumer engagement within marketing as a multi-faceted and multi-dimensional construct which is the "state that reflects consumers' individual dispositions toward engagement foci, which are context-specific." Engagement is "expressed through varying levels of affective, cognitive, and behavioral manifestations that go beyond exchange situations." Further, Hollebeek, Glynn and Brodie (2014) posit that consumer engagement is highly interactive, while Vivek, Beatty, Dalela, and Morgan (2014) add that consumer engagement is also very social. Thus, effectively tapping into consumer engagement by creating meaningful and powerful experiences is at the forefront of marketing practice. Yet, underlying this notion is the need for a better understanding of how individuals behave and consume using technology.

As found in this particular research, mobile phone usage leads to complex consumption experiences and behaviors, and as consumer experience is becoming the "heart of contemporary consumer behavior" (Taheri et al, 2016, p. 19), it is critical to look at the emerging mobile environments within this framework to help inform influential dimensions and further provide clarity on what marketers can do within these spaces to influence consumer decision making and allow them to more freely consume.

While earlier studies using liminality as a theoretical lens saw liminality in a more structural nature, with individuals passing through to newly defined post-liminal positions, more recent studies have questioned the linear nature of this interpretation. Hirschman et al (2012) viewed liminality as temporary and cyclical, with the understanding that individuals could circle through transformative processes over and over again while never ultimately reaching a changed, post-liminal status (e.g. a recovering drug addict who relapses and return to a previous state). Thus, liminality needs to be looked at conceptually as a “diverse set of processes which may include both permanent and impermanent (cycling) changes in status” (p. 372). As further illustrated by Cappellini and Yen (2016), liminality can be seen as more of a “fluid process rather than a well-defined set of thresholds to overcome” (p. 1261).

Similarly, my results showed that participants frequently cycled into a state of liminality, as they returned over and over again to a previous state. As numerous participants described, they turned to their mobile phone, whenever they had a chance, to “deal” with communication from friends. When that communication was over, participants felt a sense of closure. However, they showcased how that was a temporary transition, as they went back to the previous position of ‘needing to check in,’ or ‘seeing what they missed.’

While participants described escaping and being leisurely, a look below the surface of the data through analysis showcases that the participants were not freely opting to engage in leisurely activity, but rather illustrated that they *had to* because mobile media are so essential to contemporary life. The participants are attached to their mobile phones which are never out of arms’ reach. They arrange their lives and

manage their time to be a part of the mobile culture embedded into daily life.

Behaviors may include the incessant need to check in on snapchat or check text messages. The participants are seemingly forced to take part in order to function in society.

Limitations

This study, was conducted within the confines of the chosen philosophical infrastructure and methodological approach. The qualitative nature of this research can be construed as both a strength and a weakness. A qualitative approach does not generate a statistical or quantitatively generated ‘truth’ or ‘significance.’ Rather, it provides a rich interpretation that further explains the phenomenon under investigation.

The participant selection and data gathering techniques were also prescriptive of academic research. Purposive sampling was employed as I relied initially upon my set of informants which consisted of my undergraduate and graduate student contacts. No effort was made to extend the sample or generalize the results to a larger population.

The first method of data collection came in the form of in-depth interviews. The unstructured interviews lasted approximately 45-105 minutes for each of the 22 participants interviewed and was led by my interview guide and protocol. However, even the most experienced researcher may fail to recognize an important cue or miss a substantive piece of information. Also, the sheer amount of data collected makes full interpretation even more challenging. My role was to record the spoken word, but also to engage in and report what Geertz (1973) describes as ‘thick description,’ which

can ‘discern a wink from twitch, and a parody of a wink from an actual wink’ (Greenblatt, 1997). The mere generation of thick description lends itself to the interpretation and discernment of the researcher herself. It could be argued that multiple interpretations of the same data could be generated.

The second form of data collection came in the form of mobile diary entries. Although the mobile diary is an “innovative way to capture rich insights into processes, relationships, settings, products, and consumers” (Patterson, 2005, p. 142), reliance upon the participants to record data throughout the course of the day is paramount. Without being actually present, I was not able to prompt and elicit responses from the participants at any given moment. In addition, the ability to follow up in real time wasn’t possible. Several measures were put in place to ensure reliability of the data including regular daily prompts via the mobile diary application.

Another limitation lies within the longitudinal nature of the data. As mobile technology changes and evolves over time at a rapid pace, so too could behaviors associated with mobile technology use. The mobile diary studies lasted one week each. A longer duration and further prompts could perhaps uncover how these consumption behaviors evolve and morph over an extended period of time.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Depth Interview Recruitment Email

THE
UNIVERSITY
OF RHODE ISLAND
COLLEGE OF BUSINESS
ADMINISTRATION

7 Lippitt Road, Kingston, RI 02881 USA p:401.874.2337 f:401.874.4312 cba.uri.edu

THINK BIG  WE DO™



Dear xxxxx,

I am writing to invite you to participate in an academic research project sponsored by Dr. Hillary Leonard from the College of Business Administration at the University of Rhode Island (URI).

The purpose of the research study is to explore how you feel and act when using your mobile device. Please note that this research study is only open to individuals who are between 18-35 years of age who own and regularly use a smartphone. If you do not meet these requirements, you may not participate in this study.

You will be interviewed for approximately 1 – 1.5 hours and asked questions regarding your use, feelings, and behavior with your mobile device. The interviews will be audiotaped. To protect confidentiality, you will be assigned a pseudonym. Transcripts and digital audio files will be kept on a password protected computer in a secured/locked office in Ballentine Hall at the University of Rhode Island.

If you have questions, complaints or concerns as you participate in this study, you can contact Dr. Hillary Leonard by email: hleonard@uri.edu or phone: 401.874.4324.

Please note that research studies include only people who choose to take part. You can tell us that you don't want to be in this study. You can also start the study and then choose to stop the study at any time. This will not affect your relationship with the investigator.

You will be compensated \$5 for participating in the interview (whether you choose to finish the interview or not).

If you know anyone else who may be suitable as a participant in this research, please contact Dr. Leonard via email.

Sincerely,

Hillary Leonard
Associate Professor, Area Coordinator for Marketing
College of Business Administration
University of Rhode Island

APPENDIX B: Depth Interview Consent Form

THE
UNIVERSITY
OF RHODE ISLAND
COLLEGE OF BUSINESS
ADMINISTRATION

7 Lippitt Road, Kingston, RI 02881 USA p:401.874.2337 f:401.874.4312 cba.uri.edu



BENEFITS

There is no benefit to you from being in the study. Your taking part may help develop a greater understanding of how individuals behave within emerging mobile environments.

CONFIDENTIALITY

We will keep all research records that identify you private to the extent allowed by law. You will be assigned a pseudonym. The code sheet for this pseudonym along with the data collected will be kept on a password protected computer in a secured/locked office (Hillary Leonard's office in Ballentine Hall, Office # 321). Only those who work with this study or are performing their job duties for the University of Rhode Island will be allowed access to your information. In publications, your name will be protected.

PERSON TO CONTACT

If you have questions, complaints or concerns about this study, you can contact Dr. Hillary Leonard from the College of Business Administration at the University of Rhode Island (URI) by email: hleonard@uri.edu or phone: 401.874.4324.

Institutional Review Board: Contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) if you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant. Also, contact the IRB if you have questions, complaints or concerns which you do not feel you can discuss with the investigator. The University of Rhode Island IRB may be reached by phone at (401) 874-4328 or by e-mail at researchintegrity@etal.uri.edu.

Vice President for Research and Economic Development: You may also contact the Vice President for Research and Economic Development by phone at (401) 874-4576.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Research studies include only people who choose to take part. You can tell us that you don't want to be in this study. You can start the study and then choose to stop the study later. This will not affect your relationship with the investigator.

AUDIO/VIDEO ADDENDUM TO THE CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH

By signing this consent form, I confirm that I give my permission for digital audio recordings of me, to be used for the purposes listed above, and to be retained for 3 years. You may still participate in this study if you are not willing to be recorded.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date

COSTS AND COMPENSATION TO PARTICIPANTS

You will be compensated \$5 for participating in the interview (whether you choose to finish the interview or not).

CONSENT

By signing this consent form, I confirm I have read the information in this consent form and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I will be given a signed copy of this consent form. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date



BENEFITS

There is no benefit to you from being in the study. Your taking part may help develop a greater understanding of how individuals behave within emerging mobile environments.

CONFIDENTIALITY

We will keep all research records that identify you private to the extent allowed by law. You will be assigned a pseudonym. The code sheet for this pseudonym along with the data collected will be kept on a password protected computer in a secured/locked office (Hillary Leonard's office in Ballentine Hall, Office # 321). Only those who work with this study or are performing their job duties for the University of Rhode Island will be allowed access to your information. In publications, your name will be protected.

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APPENDIX C: Mobile Diary Recruitment Email

THE
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7 Lippitt Road, Kingston, RI 02881 USA p:401.874.2337 f:401.874.4312 cba.uri.edu



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The purpose of the research study is to explore how you feel and act when using your mobile device. Please note that this research study is only open to individuals who are between 18-35 years of age who own and regularly use a smartphone. If you do not meet these requirements, you may not participate in this study.

You will be asked to keep a mobile diary using your smartphone for a period of one week. You will be asked to submit text, photos, audio, and/or video periodically throughout the day regarding your use, feelings, and behavior when using your mobile device using the OverTheShoulder mobile application. You may still participate in this study if you are not willing to record audio or video as part of your diary submissions. To protect confidentiality, you will be assigned a pseudonym. All data submitted will be kept on a password protected computer in a secured/locked office in Ballentine Hall at the University of Rhode Island.

If you have questions, complaints or concerns as you participate in this study, you can contact Dr. Hillary Leonard by email: hleonard@uri.edu or phone: 401.874.4324.

Please note that research studies include only people who choose to take part. You can tell us that you don't want to be in this study. You can also start the study and then choose to stop the study at any time. This will not affect your relationship with the investigator.

You will be compensated \$50 for participating in the week-long mobile diary study. If you choose to stop participation at any point during the week, the \$50 will be prorated and paid to you for each full day you did participate.

This research has been approved by The University of Rhode Island Institutional Review Board.

Sincerely,

Hillary Leonard
Associate Professor, Area Coordinator for Marketing
College of Business Administration
University of Rhode Island

APPENDIX D: Mobile Diary Consent Form

THE
UNIVERSITY
OF RHODE ISLAND
COLLEGE OF BUSINESS
ADMINISTRATION

7 Lippitt Road, Kingston, RI 02881 USA p:401.874.2337 f:401.874.4312 cba.uri.edu



Consent Form for Research

BACKGROUND

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether you want to volunteer to take part in this study. This research is sponsored by Dr. Hillary Leonard from the College of Business Administration at the University of Rhode Island (URI). If you have more questions later, please contact Dr. Hillary Leonard: hleonard@uri.edu.

The purpose of the research study is to explore how you feel and act when using your mobile device. Please note that this research study is only open to individuals who are between 18-35 years of age. If you do not meet this age requirement, you may not participate in this study.

STUDY PROCEDURE

You will be asked to keep a mobile diary using your smartphone for a period of one week. You will be asked to submit text, photos, audio, and/or video periodically throughout the day regarding your use, feelings, and behavior when using your mobile device using the OverTheShoulder mobile application. You may still participate in this study if you are not willing to record audio or video as part of your diary submissions. The digital files will be kept on a password protected computer in a secured/locked office (Hillary Leonard's office in Ballentine Hall, Office # 321), and will be destroyed after 3 years.

Inclusion/Exclusion: Must be a smartphone user.

RISKS

The risks or discomforts from participating in this study are minimal. You have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time if you feel that your physical comfort, safety, or privacy is not fully safeguarded. If you do feel upset from this experience for any reason, you can tell the researcher, and he/she will tell you about resources available to help.



BENEFITS

There is no benefit to you from being in the study. Your taking part may help develop a greater understanding of how individuals behave within emerging mobile environments.

CONFIDENTIALITY

We will keep all research records that identify you private to the extent allowed by law. You will be assigned a pseudonym. The code sheet for this pseudonym along with the data collected will be kept on a password protected computer in a secured/locked office (Hillary Leonard's office in Ballentine Hall, Office # 321). Only those who work with this study or are performing their job duties for the University of Rhode Island will be allowed access to your information. In publications, your name will be protected.

PERSON TO CONTACT

If you have questions, complaints or concerns about this study, you can contact Dr. Hillary Leonard from the College of Business Administration at the University of Rhode Island (URI) by email: hleonard@uri.edu or phone: 401.874.4324.

Institutional Review Board: Contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) if you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant. Also, contact the IRB if you have questions, complaints or concerns which you do not feel you can discuss with the investigator. The University of Rhode Island IRB may be reached by phone at (401) 874-4328 or by e-mail at researchintegrity@etal.uri.edu.

Vice President for Research and Economic Development: You may also contact the Vice President for Research and Economic Development by phone at (401) 874-4576.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Research studies include only people who choose to take part. You can tell us that you don't want to be in this study. You can start the study and then choose to stop the study later. This will not affect your relationship with the investigator.

COSTS AND COMPENSATION TO PARTICIPANTS

You will be compensated \$50 for participating in the week-long mobile diary study. If you choose to stop participation at any point during the week, the \$50 will be prorated and paid to you for each full day you did participate.

CONSENT

By signing this consent form, I confirm I have read the information in this consent form and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I will be given a signed copy of this consent form. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date



AUDIO/VIDEO ADDENDUM TO THE CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH

By signing this consent form, I confirm that I give my permission for digital audio and audio recordings of me, to be used for the purposes listed above, and to be retained for 3 years. You may still participate in this study if you are not willing to record audio or video as part of your diary submissions.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date

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